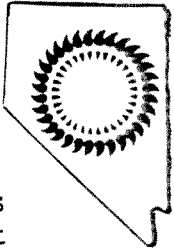


NEVADA CLIMATE SUMMARY

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MARCH 1990 Documents Section
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SYNOPSIS

March climate equalled an unfortunately all too familiar combination of warmer and drier than normal conditions in the Silver State. With temperatures 3-5 degrees above normal and precipitation well below normal in all but the Northeast, 1990 water year to date percentage of normal precipitation is dismal, ranging from ten to 20% of normal in South Central Nevada to 80% in part of the Northeast. East Slope Sierra Nevada Watersheds are in the 45-65% range and Southern Nevada 50-60%. Mountain snowpack water content is equally bad, ranging from 68% of normal in the extreme Northeast to only 41% in the Lake Tahoe Basin. Even worse, during the first 10 days of April, unusually high temperatures and little precipitation have lowered, for example, Tahoe Basin percentage of normal from 41% to 29% and the Carson River Watershed from 47% to 39% of normal!

All this leads to Spring and early Summer stream forecasts that are depressing for this 4th consecutive year of drought, and will be much like Summer 1988, causing millions of dollars of losses in agriculture, recreation, etc. Streamflow forecasts range from a high of 55% in the Owyhee River in the extreme Northeast, and 53% in the Lower Colorado into Lake Mead, to only 35% of normal in the Carson, Tahoe-Truckee, and Walker River areas.

TEMPERATURES

Average temperatures ranged from 2 1/2 to 5 1/2 degrees above normal Statewide, with most of the State 4-5 degrees above normal. Although no new monthly records were set for warmth, at several locations this March ranks in the top 10 warmest 3rd months this century. For example, in Las Vegas this was the 3rd warmest March since Airport records began 53 years ago. Only 1972 and 1986 were warmer.

Highest readings were in the South, with Laughlin at 96 degrees, and Amargosa Farms, Cottonwood Cove and Boulder Beach all registering 93 degrees during the last week of the month. The State record high for March was 100 degrees at Cottonwood Cove four years ago.

On the "low side" it wasn't very cold for this winter month, as Diamond Valley (near Eureka) fell to only -6 at mid-month, with -5's at Pine Valley and Ruth. The record for March is -33 set at Diamond Valley 21 years ago.

Nearshore Lake Mead water temperatures were in the mid 50's during the month.

PRECIPITATION

Except for a portion of the Northeast, precipitation was well below normal again this month. In fact, about 1/2 the State was less than 1/2 normal, during this normally wet end-of-winter month. Some locations in Southern Nevada had no precipitation, while East Slope Sierra Watersheds could muster only 10-40% of normal.

The wettest location in the State was in the Snake Range where Great Basin National Park had the 3rd wettest March in 53 years of record, as almost twice normal, or 2.93" fell. Only March's in 1973 (4.96") and 1952 (3.25") were wetter. The 23" of snow that fell on the 12th at the 6800 foot Park Headquarters location was the greatest 24 hour March fall of record, surpassing the 15" in 1952. It was also the 3rd greatest 24 hour snowfall for any month. April 1964 had a 25" day and December, 1947, 24". Add to this the 49 1/2" that fell here in February, and the February-March 1990 total is 85 1/2", for the snowiest two consecutive months on record here. The entire winter averages only 72"! Of course this translates into 10 feet or more of snow above the 10,000 foot elevation in the Park.

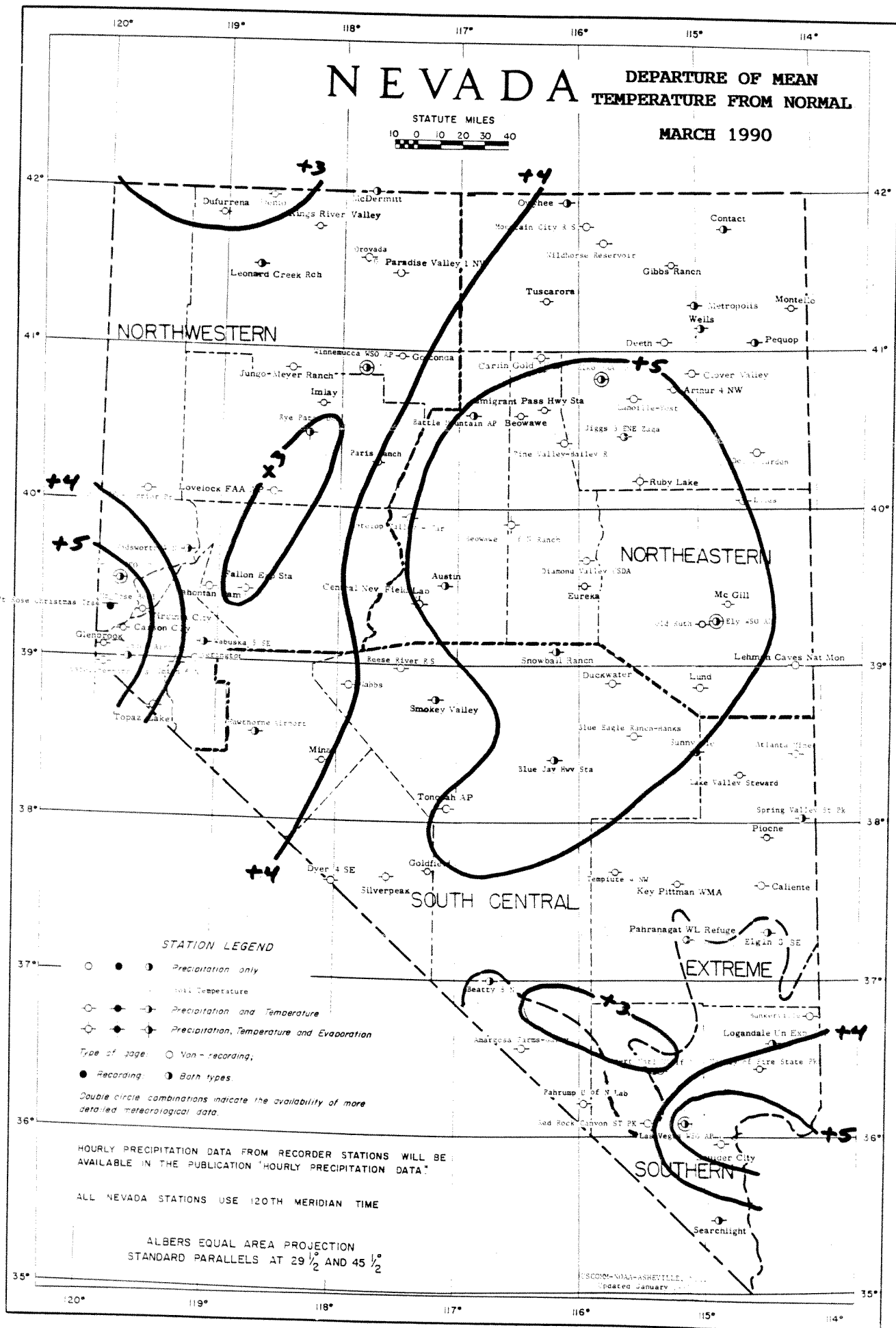
SUNSHINE, WIND AND EVAPORATION

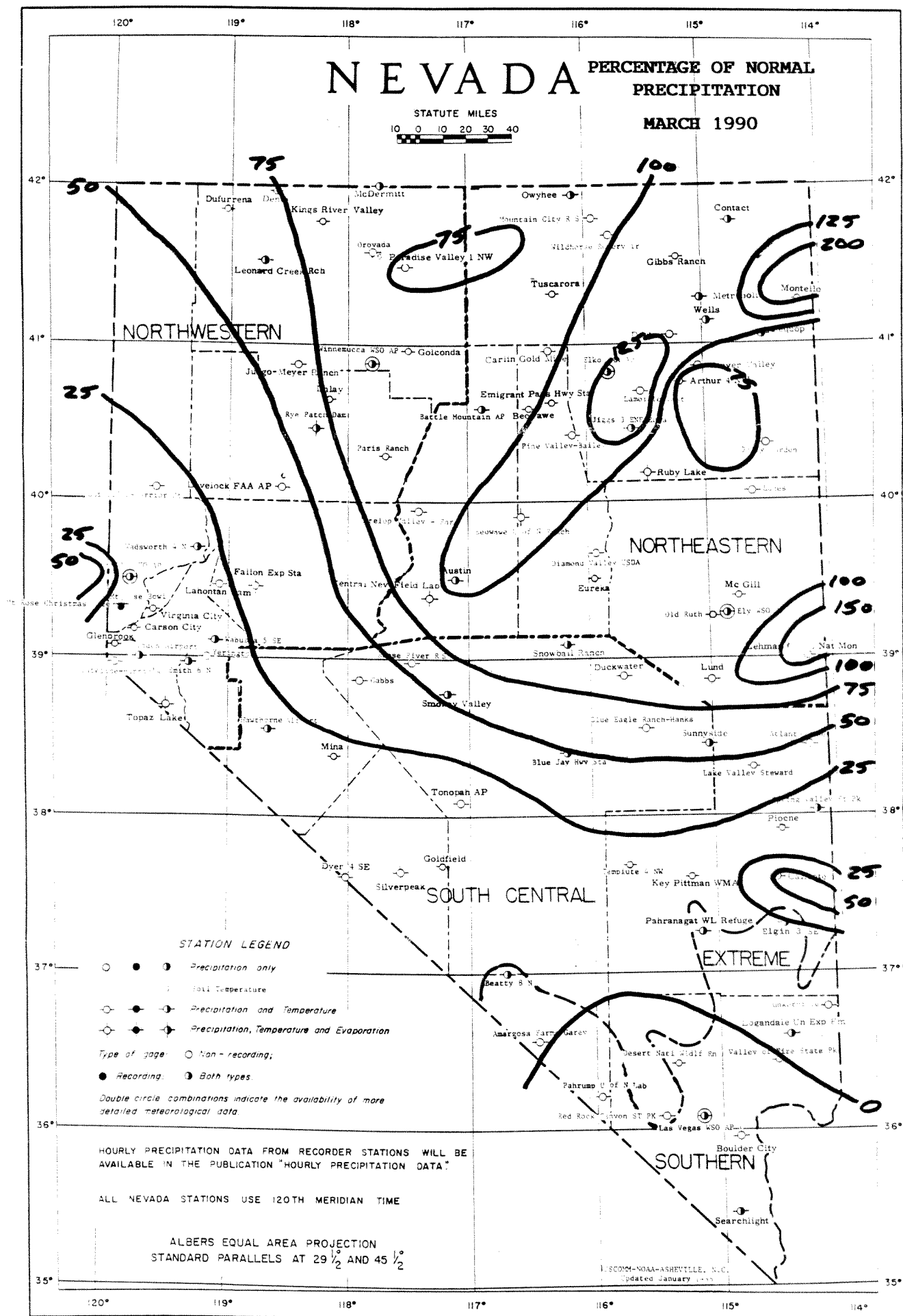
Sunshine hours and wind speed averages were near or a little above normal, with Las Vegas the sunniest with 85% of possible hours, and Reno the windiest with gusts over 60 mph in the city's western suburbs.

Evaporation was also near or a little above normal, with 6.84" at Boulder City, 6.35" at Logandale, 6.17" at Pahrump, and 4.00" at Honey Lake Fleming.

NOTE: What are April's temperature extremes? Laughlin and Cottonwood Cove both reached 106 degrees on April 7, 1989, while Ruth fell to -12 degrees on April 22, 1963.

John James
State Climatologist





NEVADA

PERCENTAGE OF NORMAL PRECIPITATION

STATUTE MILES
10 0 10 20 30 40

WATER YEAR 1990
(Oct. 1, 1989–March 31, 1990)

